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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Coast rebuilding shifts to long-range

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Anyone who travels the Mississippi Gulf Coast these days hears one message above all others: the work has just begun.

Two years after Hurricane Katrina stormed ashore and wiped out much of the area, the mountains of debris have been taken away — but the effort to rebuild and restore the Coast will take much longer, according to Steve Mooneyham, missions director for Gulf Coast Association in Gulfport.

"We have to replace housing that took five to eight generations to build, and we have to do it in five years," Mooneyham said.

Jim Didlake, men's ministry director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and Mississippi Baptist's disaster relief coordinator, estimates that more than 100,000 volunteers have come to the Coast since Katrina, including the feeding effort that resulted in more than four million meals served to storm victims.

"We've had a tremendous outpouring from Southern Baptists. We need to keep up those volunteer numbers in the future for the volume of work that still needs to be done," Mooneyham said.

David Baldwin, a retired paper company employee, and his wife Patti, a retired teacher, of Vicksburg, have taken on the task of coordinating the volunteers for Gulf Coast Association.

"We continue to need both skilled and unskilled construction workers. We need construction foremen. By the second week of August every year, the labor pool drops off dramatically as school starts and we lose students and teachers," David Baldwin said. "We have several houses under construction right now that may be in danger of not getting finished."

Mooneyham also stressed the need for financial gifts as well as volunteer manpower. Baldwin estimated the cost of one replacement home to be in the range of \$45,000, not including labor.

Mooneyham said the Coast "definitely" needs new churches started as the population shifts to other areas of the association. People are moving inland to get away from the hardest-hit areas on or near the water, he said.

"Economic issues are driving people north, more so than anything else," said Dionne Williams, church development strategist for Gulf Coast Association. "The availability and cost of rental property, as well as insurance issues, are forcing people to move as far north as Stone County. I was told officials there are making plans for 20,000 new water meters in the coming years to accommodate the expected growth."

In addition to the need for construction workers and financial aid, there is a great need for survey teams to canvass the Coast and pinpoint where people are moving and what needs to be done to help them, Williams said.

"We can use survey teams every weekend," he pointed out.

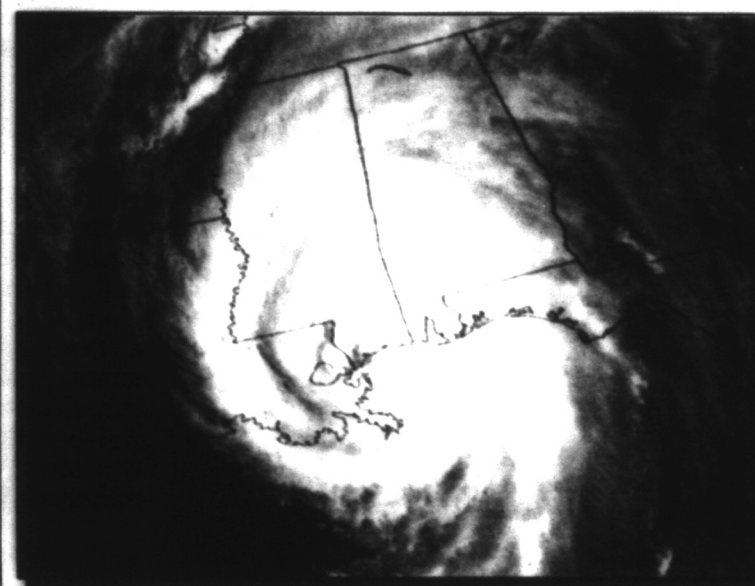
Mendy King, church growth specialist for Gulf Coast Association, echoed Williams' observations on the changing nature of the population in the association.

"We don't have accurate demographics because all that has changed so radically since the storm," King said. "It's like trying to hit a moving target; the demographics are constantly shifting."

For more information on Gulf Coast Association's long-range rebuilding effort, contact the association at P.O. Box 2369, Gulfport, MS 39505. Telephone: (228) 832-4311. E-mail: gcba@cableone.net.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Two years later...



Through the cooperative efforts of Gulf Coast Association in Gulfport, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, the North American Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga., and the Baptist state conventions of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, many homes along the Gulf Coast have been made livable again. There are still thousands of homes from Biloxi/D'Iberville in the east to Pearlinton in the west that still need attention. This rebuild will last for at least three years.

The recovery of the Gulf Coast has been ongoing since the day the hurricane hit. Most of the churches damaged or destroyed have either been repaired and rebuilt so services can be held or arrangements have been made for an alternate location for meeting. Gulf Coast Association has now turned her efforts to continuing the repair and rebuild the homes of Gulf Coast residents.

Volunteer teams of skilled and unskilled laborers are still needed. Interested churches may contact David Baldwin at the Gulf Coast Association office at (228) 832-4311, to make plans to come to the Gulf Coast to help.

Please note that Gulf Coast Association is presently not taking youth teams.

Miss. CP up for August

Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) in August showed a marked increase over the previous month and continued the rise over the same giving period last year, according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. The August total of \$3,389,576, was \$1,075,183, or 46.5%, above the \$2,314,393 given last month, and \$314,408, or 10.2% above the total of \$3,075,168 given in August 2006. Total Mississippi CP giving for the current fiscal year, which runs from January-December, stands at \$27,711,515, a rise of \$593,703, or 2.6%, over last year's giving through August and \$1,585,559, or 7.2%, ahead of current budget needs. The 2007 Mississippi CP budget of \$33,188,934, was approved by messengers to the 2006 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. A total of \$2,765,745 is needed each month to meet the convention board's budget for 2007. In addition to helping support more than 10,700 missionaries in the U.S. and around the world through affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi CP helps fund such programs as the January Bible Study Preview Clinics held during September at various locations around Mississippi, and the State College Student Conference on September 28-29.

SBC CP lower for month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Giving to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program in August was \$15,662,488, which was 8.8%, or \$1,504,159, below the \$17,166,647 given the previous month, and .9%, or \$141,453 ahead the \$15,521,036 received in August 2006, according to SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman. As of August 31, the year-to-date total of \$187,804,142 for Cooperative Program missions is \$4,680,522 ahead of the \$183,123,620 received at the same point in 2006. Designated giving of \$200,033,835 for the same year-to-date period is 6.7%, or \$12,481,620, above gifts of \$187,552,214 received at this point last year. The \$4,468,440 in designated gifts received last month is \$303,428, below the \$4,771,868 received in August 2006, a decrease of 6.4%. For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$187,804,142 is 105% of the \$179,619,387 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. It is separate from the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Fund of which 100% of monies go to aid the needy in the general public.



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The season of enthusiasm

Football season is upon us once again, and we are once again reminded that "fan" really is shorthand for "fanatic."

Stadiums are brimming over every weekend. It's a new beginning, and the faithful followers of even the worst teams can share an early-season hope no matter how unrealistic it may be (see "fan" above).

Gallons upon gallons of ink will be expended to write about each game, both before and after the game. Millions of megawatts of electricity will carry thousands of games over the airwaves of this country. We've even co-opted satellites and fiber optics so the games can be seen and heard around the world both on television and the Internet, more often than not in real time.

Statistics are pored over, and bold predictions are made. Fans sign up for special broadcast packages and purchase

expensive, high-definition televisions that allow them to screen more than one game at a time. An untold number of video recorders will be set for game time. Oh, the agony of missing even one game — even one play of one game!

The lifestyle of the fan/fanatic must be an interesting subject for sociologists and other observers of human nature. While important national issues remain unresolved and wars swirl all around us, we turn our attention to fleeting games of competition the outcome of which will soon be forgotten (especially when the new season rolls around next year).

"OH MY, DOCTOR—DO YOU THINK I REALLY COULD? WHAT WOULD MY CHURCH THINK? IMAGINE—AN ENTIRE SERMON WITHOUT ONE SPORTS STORY! I THINK I'M GOING TO CRY!"



Would that we possessed the same unbridled passion for the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Sadly, many of the same folks who arose only the day before at 5 a.m., dressed in school colors, drove for several hours across the state, attended the game, partied after-

ward, and arrived home after midnight, cannot drag themselves out of bed and arrive at church with the same enthusiasm they had for the ball game.

Many of the same folks who focus so much time, energy, and money on ball games can't seem to muster any of those attributes when it comes to sharing the Gospel or knocking on doors and inviting people to worship with them.

Can we even imagine what it would be like to fill a stadium every weekend with 70,000 screaming, adoring fans of Jesus Christ? Can we even imagine what it would be like to fill hundreds of those stadiums every weekend for worship and praise, as we do for our favorite football teams?

Can we even imagine what it would be like for all those people in all those stadiums to exit on fire for witnessing and discipling, and with great anticipation and planning for the next weekend's gathering? Can we even imagine having the same excitement about feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, taking care of the sick, and helping to rebuild our own Mississippi Gulf Coast, all in the name of Jesus?

Oh, if only lost people could see us working for Jesus in the

same way we support our favorite teams. If only lost people could see that Christians have their priorities in order, that the rescue of one soul from a dark and dying world is infinitely more important than the most important ball game there could ever be.

What could we accomplish? Just listen to the roar from the stadiums next weekend.

A 'Star' is born through missionary service in Africa

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — They call her Star, not because she's famous but because they hope she'll become a shining "star" for God to her family, neighbors, and other women in her village.

Star had not accepted Christ as her Savior when two nurses, Kelly Grimes and Paula Denton (names changed for security reasons), arrived in her small North African village to teach women in northern Africa how to be midwives.

Star always seemed to be around for the Bible stories shared by Grimes and Denton, two-year missionary journeymen with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Star and her husband had moved to the village several weeks earlier, but no one seemed to know where the couple came from or what had prompted the move. The villagers knew, however, that both of Star's children had died at a young age. In that culture, it is shameful for women not to have children. "This is where their honor and worth is found," Denton said.

Despite her circumstances, Star helped women in the village deliver their babies.

"When Kelly and I taught midwife training in her village, she was eager to come and learn as much as she could," Denton said. "She sat up close to us on the mat during each training session and would participate in the discussions."

Because none of the women could read or write, the journeymen taught mid-

wifery by telling stories and discussing them. Star was eager to answer the nurses' questions as well as help explain the concepts Denton and Grimes were teaching in the local language.

"We noticed right away her passion and giftedness for learning [and] a charisma that could influence the other women," Denton said. "We became good friends with Star as we spent time with her while she did her daily tasks [of] weaving baskets [and] grinding millet and then cooking it over an open fire."

The journeymen had several opportunities to share Bible stories with her. They prayed she would become a believer and realize her potential as a leader among the other women believers in the village.

"This was so important because although there were several women who professed to follow Jesus, they had not been able to grow in discipleship," Denton said. Such cultural issues as illiteracy and the women's lack of confidence in their ability to learn and understand spiritual concepts hindered them from growing in their faith.

"During the last session of the midwife training, we shared the story of the birth of Christ," Denton recounted. "The women really connected with the story, as they could relate well to the simple circumstances Mary delivered in and that Jesus was born into."

After Denton and Grimes left the village, they learned that Star and her hus-

band were in the "process" of following Jesus, with Denton noting, "Many Muslim-background believers describe their conversion as a 'process.'"

"Kelly and I were so excited we could hardly contain our joy," Denton continued. "Our friend Star, our star pupil from the midwife training, had come to know the truth!"

Star, now a leader among the women believers, asked the other women why they hadn't shared their faith with her earlier, and she has begun to encourage the women that they are capable of learning and teaching Bible stories, Denton said.

"God used our short time in the [North African village] to impact eternity," Denton reflected.

"In three months God helped us develop and teach the midwife training, and then He used the training to help answer our prayer to raise up a leader among the women believers," Denton said, "and because Star is so gifted in this area of the midwife training, there is a plan to hopefully use her to help go into new villages and teach the material, which will allow her an avenue to share her faith with countless others."

"She is a strong woman, so it is exciting to see what God will do in and through her life," Grimes added. "It was so neat to be there at a time to watch God draw this woman to Himself... so she [can] be an instrument in reaching and discipling other women."

Twins await court ruling on Islamic education

ISTANBUL, Turkey (BP and local reports) — An Egyptian court adjourned the Sept. 3 hearing of 13-year-old Coptic Christian twins legally forced to take Islamic education after their estranged father became a Muslim.

The attorney for the two young Christian boys forced the adjournment by skipping the hearing, as the outcome of another case involving converts to Islam seeking "re-conversion" could affect the twins' case.

Coptic Orthodox Christianity is the indigenous Egyptian form of Christianity that, according to tradition, the Apostle Mark established in Egypt in the middle of the first century AD. The church is one of the Oriental Orthodox churches. Its leader is the Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the Holy See of Saint Mark.

The twins' case highlights inequalities non-Muslims face in Egypt, where one's religion, printed on all official documents, regulates family laws. Custody of children is automatically given to whichever parent is Muslim, according to many interpretations of sharia (Islamic law) enshrined in the nation's constitution.

Twins Mario and Andrew Medhat Ramsis unwillingly "became" Muslim after their father converted to Islam and used his legal right to change the religion on their birth certificates.

In February, the boys' mother discovered that they had been placed in Islamic education classes at school to reflect their father's choice, though the Muslim man was no longer living with his Christian family since his conversion to Islam and remarriage in 2002.

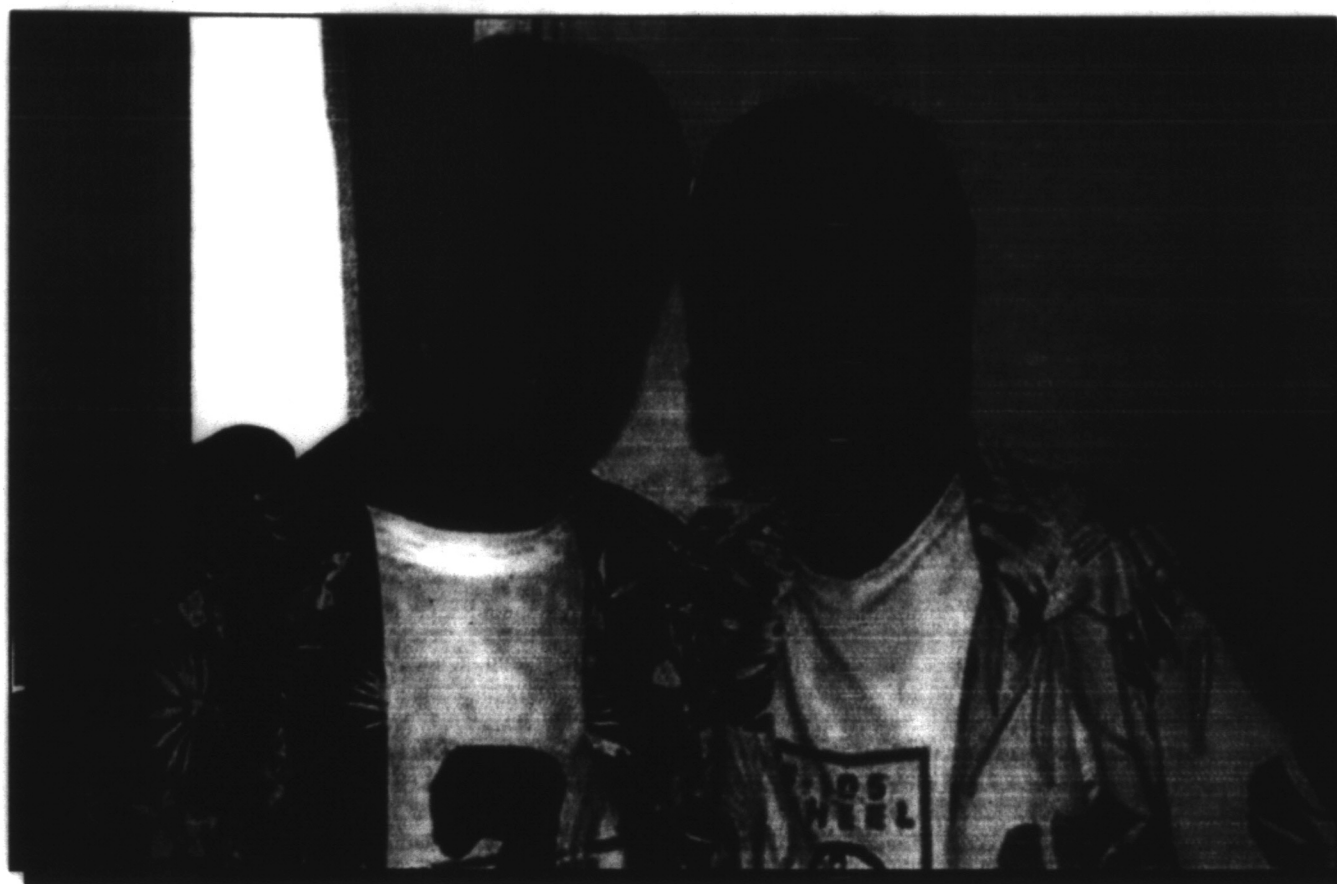
The twins gained notoriety when they refused to take their Islamic religion exam in May, required in order to enter the next grade. "I am Christian," each boy wrote on a makeup test in July. They turned in the exam with all of the answers left blank.

Egyptian Education Minister Yusri al-Gamal announced Aug. 25 that he would automatically pass the boys to the next grade, but the twins' Christian mother said an underlying problem remains.

"I was made to understand that Egyptian law grants a mother custody of her children until they are 15, but I lately discovered that this applies only to Muslim mothers," Kamilia Lutfi said in an Aug. 27 press conference, according to Coptic-owned weekly Watani.

Andrew and Mario Ramsis' future hinges on whether the court applies civil law, which allows them to remain with their mother, or certain interpretations of Islamic law, which stipulate that children belong to whichever parent is Muslim, their lawyer Naguib Gabriel said.

Gabriel skipped the hearing on Sept. 3 when the court was



AWAITING THEIR FATE — Twins Mario and Andrew Medhat Ramsis, raised in Egypt as Coptic Christians, face a court hearing on whether they can be forced to take Islamic education courses under Egyptian law after their father converted to Islam and assumed custody of the boys. (BP photo courtesy of Compass Direct News)

expected to rule on the twins' future, causing the court to adjourn indefinitely. Gabriel said he hopes to delay the final hearing until after Nov. 17, when the fate of 12 converts to Islam seeking "re-conversion" back to Christianity is to be decided.

Gabriel said the Nov. 17 ruling on "re-conversion" would give him a clue about the government's position toward the Ramsis twins' case.

"The whole point is whether the court will rule according to Egypt's civil law — in which case the converts will be free to revert to their Christianity — or according to sharia, meaning that ridda [the penalty for apostasy] would be applied," the lawyer said.

According to many mainstream interpretations of Islamic law in Egypt, the punishment for apostasy is death.

Gabriel has come under increasing pressure from conservative Muslims for his role in defending the twins. Lawyer Mohammed al-Shishtawi filed a complaint with Egypt's prosecutor general against Gabriel during the week of Aug. 27, accusing the Christian lawyer of spreading false rumors that harm Egypt's national unity, inciting sectarian strife, and tarnishing Egypt's image abroad, according to the daily newspaper al-Akhbar.

In a related case, an administrative court postponed a verdict on Sept. 4 for another set of twins, 14-year-olds Imad and Nancy Halim of the country's tiny Baha'i community.

After Baha'is lost the right to print their religion on official documents in December 2006, the brother and sister's father, Raouf Hindi Halim, sued to have the religion field on their

identification papers left blank.

As long as the twins refuse to place Islam, Christianity, or Judaism on their new electronic documents, they cannot receive basic services such as education and some healthcare, said Hossam Baghat of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

"Basically, they can't enroll in public schools, and that is the most important problem," Baghat told Compass Direct following Tuesday's hearing.

The lawyer said that the children would soon be faced with other difficulties if they do not obtain birth certificates and other electronic documents by the time they turn 16. "Once they turn 16, it's a criminal offense not to have one," Baghat said.

Baghat clarified that Egypt's Baha'is were neither seeking to completely remove the religion status from documents of all citizens nor to gain official recognition as a minority community.

"They are simply asking to obtain these mandatory basic

documents without being forced to choose a religion that they do not believe in," Baghat said.

Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court ruled against the group listing its religion on official documents in December 2006, on the premise that Baha'ism is not one of three "heavenly religions" (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) recognized by Islam.

Baha'ism was founded on the teachings of Baha'u'llah, a Persian his followers believed to be God's prophet to humanity in the 1800s.

Muslims consider Baha'ism heretical for its acceptance of a prophet after Muhammad, whom Muslims believe to be God's final messenger to humanity.

The author of this article, Peter Lamprecht, is a writer for Compass Direct News based in Santa Ana, Ca. Compass Direct News provides reports on Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith. Used by permission.

Looking back

10 years ago

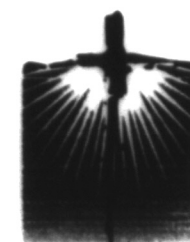
Southside Church, Russellville, Ala., makes history by being the first church to order literature from the Baptist Sunday School Board's website.

20 years ago

"I'll have to preach new sermons now!" says Dolton Haggan, pastor of Pocahontas Church, after the church burned to the ground following a lightning strike the evening of Sept. 10. Gone are his Bible, study lessons, and sermon notes. "The work of a lifetime," he says.

50 years ago

Billy Graham wraps up his 16-week New York City crusade with a rally in Times Square attracting a crowd of 125,000. Total attendance at the crusade at Madison Square Garden was 2,131,600, with 56,767 decisions for Christ.



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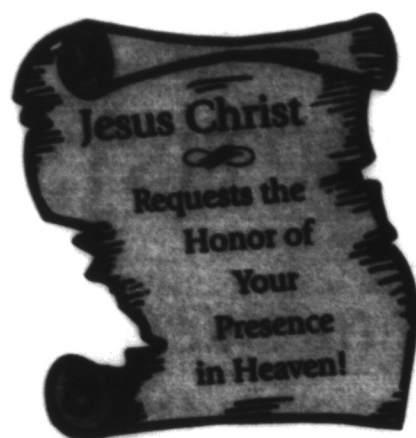
**THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

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No. 36



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

LET'S TALK ABOUT FISHING

Recently, I had another opportunity to speak at the Friday night Kickoff Banquet of the Fishers of Men National Tournament Trail. This is a Christian fishing tournament and folks come from all over to participate. For years Jim Phillips, pastor of North Greenwood Church, has enabled Mississippi to have some fine tournaments. It has been a joy for Mississippi Baptists to help, and it has especially been my joy on a number of occasions to speak. When they get together on Friday, they are poised for a Saturday morning crack-of-day beginning to catch as many bass as they can out at Ross Barnett Reservoir.

On this particular Friday night, we had a great meal at First Baptist Church Madison. We had a good time of fellowship, and then I had the privilege of sharing a message of God's care for them and His call upon their lives. After the service and all of the announcements and assignments had been made and people were leaving, I walked out into the parking lot. The wind was blowing hard, angry clouds were rolling around above, lightening was striking near us, and the rain was about to begin. A couple of the guys



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

rolled their windows down, spoke to me, and said, "Man, this looks rough!" I said, "It sure does." He said, "I sure hope that it gets out of here tonight and that we do not have to face this tomorrow. This is the kind of weather that you want to pull back up to the landing and find you a good place just to sit and talk about fishing rather than go out there to fish."

It wasn't long until the rains descended, the floods came, and I drove away thinking about what this tournament fisherman said, "This is the kind of weather that you just want to pull up to the landing and find you a place to sit and talk about fishing rather than fish." Jesus called the majority of His disciples out of the fishing profession. It is who they were and what they did. They were fishermen. When the Son of God called them to follow Him

they must have wondered what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. In Matthew 4:19, He explained to them that they were going to keep doing what they had always done except the "catch" was going to be different. "Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men." The lessons they knew well from their fishing trade could be applied to what they would do in Kingdom work. Fishermen go after the fish. The fish do not come to them.

It is impossible just to stay in bed, kick back in a recliner watching the TV, or just stay at the banquet table and catch fish. You have to go after them. Sometimes in our churches, we think that because we build a building and unlock the doors on Sunday that people are going to flock in to meet with Jesus, have their lives transformed, and

become loyal disciples of the Lord. It does not happen that way. It is imperative that we know and love Him and reach out to them.

Fishermen also go fishing even when not everything is just perfect. As with these tournament fishermen, conditions are not always ideal. The water is not always smooth and the circumstances could be against them, but it is time to go fishing. How many of us would prefer to pull up to the landing, sit around in the fellowship group, and just talk about fishing rather than go fishing? The water is not always smooth, the temperature is not always just right, the people who are fishing may not be doing exactly as you want them to do, and you may not feel so hot.

Do you know of someone who needs God's love and your care? You may have been praying for them. You may have even thought about trying to talk to them about our wonderful Savior, but it just seems like every time you almost reach out to them you decide to pull back to the landing and just talk about fishing again.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

Singing Churchmen set for Peru sweep in late September

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

In their worldwide travels spreading the Gospel through music, the Mississippi Singing Churchmen have amassed a lot of "firsts" — but their upcoming trip to Peru offers one of the most unique concert locations in the group's long history.

For the first time ever, they'll be singing at a city landfill.

You read right. The Churchmen will be singing at the main landfill for Lima, the South American nation's capital city, where more than 10,000 people reside in absolute poverty as they try to scratch out a living from other people's trash.

"It is a place of utter destitution, inhabited by people who need to know the Lord," said Slater Murphy, associate pastor for worship at Fairview Church, Columbus, and missions director for the Churchmen.

Murphy and other members of the Churchmen planning the Peru trip have worked closely with Kevin and Pam Shearer, native Mississippians working in Peru for the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention. An advance team of Churchmen traveled to Peru in February to make arrangements for the group's tour, scheduled for September 28-October 6.

"This will be the shortest trip for the Churchmen, but the largest group," said L. Graham Smith, church music director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). "There are 49 ministers of music committed to go, which is about twice as many as we have had in the past."

In addition to the landfill concert, the Churchmen will perform for a large com-



as music minister at Union Church, Picayune, has donated much of the Spanish-language music to be used during the tour and is advising the trip planners.

The Churchmen also intend to donate a three-octave set of handbells they will use during their performances to the Baptist mission in Lima. Pam Shearer will utilize the handbells in courses she teaches at the local Baptist seminary, said Edd Brashier, minister of music at Brandon Church, Brandon, and current Churchmen president.

The Churchmen are also working with the Shearers to open ministry doors in the area of the country recently struck by a major earthquake. "Our reports are that the earthquake has enhanced evangelistic efforts in the area, because it awakened many people to the fragility of life," Smith said.

Ken Rhodes, MBCB missions mobilization director, will accompany the Churchmen to Peru to serve as the speaker and preacher at Churchmen events.

In other Churchmen news, the group's latest live CD has become its most successful recording and has gone into a third printing. The performance on which the CD is based was recorded earlier this year with 89 Churchmen at Highland Church, Meridian, by Dogwood Productions of Mobile.

The CD is available through the MBCB Church Music Department, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3267 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 267. E-mail: palford@mbcb.org. Cost is \$15 per CD. Proceeds go to fund the mission work of the Churchmen, such as the Peru tour.

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Homecoming & Revivals

Baxterville Church, Lumberton: Revival, Sept. 16-21; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Cecil Hawthorne, speaker; Cassie Kitchens, music; Raymond Parkin, pastor.

Benton Church, Benton: Homecoming, Oct. 7; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m., followed by worship and fellowship lunch; Roy Hawkins, speaker; Charles Moore, pastor.

First Church, Benndale: Homecoming and revival, Oct. 7-12; Sun., 11 a.m. followed by covered dish lunch and afternoon singing; Rocky Creek Country Boys, music; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m., with special music nightly; Burnise Havard, speaker; Simon Erkhart, pastor.

First Church, Columbus: 175th anniversary and homecoming, Oct. 6-7; Sat., 10:30 a.m. fellowship, historic tours followed by lunch and worship; Sun., Sunday School, 8:45; worship, 10 a.m., followed by lunch, and wor-

ship and music, 2 p.m.; Joe McKeever and Bobby Douglas, speakers; Shawn Parker, pastor.

First Church, Pecan Grove, Ellisville: Homecoming, Sept. 30; special music, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Russell Cottingham, speaker; Answered Prayers, music.

Leaf River Church, Pineville: Revival, Sept. 24-25, 7 p.m. nightly; Mark Byrd, speaker.

Longview Church, Pontotoc: Homecoming, Sept. 23; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Johnny Sykes, speaker.

Macedonia Church, Blue Mountain: Homecoming and revival, Sept. 23-26; Sun., worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and afternoon singing, 1:30 p.m.; pastor Terry Hall, speaker; The Martins, music; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Kevin Purdon, speaker; special music each night.

Macedonia Church, Lee County: 95th anniversary and homecoming, Sept. 16; services, 9:30-11:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Donald Payne, speaker; Terry Faulkner, pastor; Billy Little, music.

Mt. Nelson Church, Neshoba Association: 165th anniversary and homecoming; services, 10:45 a.m., followed by potluck lunch; Mack Alford, pastor.

New Hope Church, Foxworth: Homecoming, Sun., Oct. 7; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and concert, 6:30 p.m.; Bobby Smith, speaker; David Grimsley and Calm Assurance, music; tent revival, Oct. 21-25; Sunday, covered dish lunch; Melvin Mordecai, speaker; Steve and Becky Carver, music.

North Morton Church, Morton: Homecoming, Sept. 16; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon

praise and worship; Randall Creel, speaker; Tim Frith and The Gospel Echoes, music.

Ramah Church, McCall Creek: Revival, Sept. 30-Oct. 3; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Gene Douglas, speaker; Shelly and Irene Johnston, music.

Rocky Point Church, Carthage: Homecoming, Sept. 23; worship, 10:45 a.m., followed by afternoon singing; Shane McGivney, speaker; Natalie Marshall Lum, music.

Sunrise Church, Carthage: Homecoming, Sept. 23; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch. John Sanders, speaker; Tony Kinton, music; David Addy, pastor.

Victory Church, Bassfield: Homecoming, Sept. 23; worship, 10 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; five former pastors, speakers; in church music and specials; Geroge Gerald Autlman, pastor.

Bibliocipher

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RLH KDUHU CG ELKDCEB

YLWUHUT, KDNK GDNA

ELK SU HUWUNAUT;

EUCKDUH DCT, KDNK

GCNA ELK SU IELME.

AJIU KMUAUWU: KML

Clue: M = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Thirteen: Thirty-Eight.

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Staff Changes

1. **Carterville Church, Petal,** has called Kristpher S. Smith as minister of music effective Aug. 15. Smith comes from First Church, Natchitoches, La. He holds degrees from Louisiana College and Southwestern Seminary, and comes with his wife, Hope.



2. Hubbard and daughter

2. **Forest Church, Forest,** has called Doug Hubbard as associate pastor of music and senior adults effective this past May. He is shown with his daughter Abigail.



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Mississippi College Librarian:

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Youth Group, First Church, Rolling Fork



2. Deacon Ordination, First Church, Leakesville



3. Walker recognized, Wynndale Church, Terry

1. The youth of **First Church, Rolling Fork**, participated in a DiscipleNow weekend Aug. 2-5, with 21 youth involved in Bible study, mission work, and fellowship. The students also visited the Magic Springs Amusement Park, Hot Springs, Ark., for a Third Day concert. Shown are the participants.

2. **First Church, Leakesville**, held a deacon ordination service for Rickey Bradley Aug. 26. Shown are Daryl Bradley, Maggie Bradley, Bradley, and pastor Philip Price.

3. Susan Walker, pianist at **Wynndale Church, Terry**, retired after 30 years of service July 22. She served Wynndale Church for 12 years, and served other state churches for 18 years. Walker was presented a Certificate of Appreciation by the Church Music Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

4. **Forest Church, Forest**, held a baby dedication Aug. 21. Shown are Doug and Kelly Hubbard, their new daughter Lily Kate Grace, their other daughter Abigail, and pastor Gordon Sansing.

5. **First Church, Coldwater**, delivered pennies for the Memorial to the Missing at the Baptist Building, Jackson Aug. 30. Shown are interim pastor P.J. Scott and several of the participants.

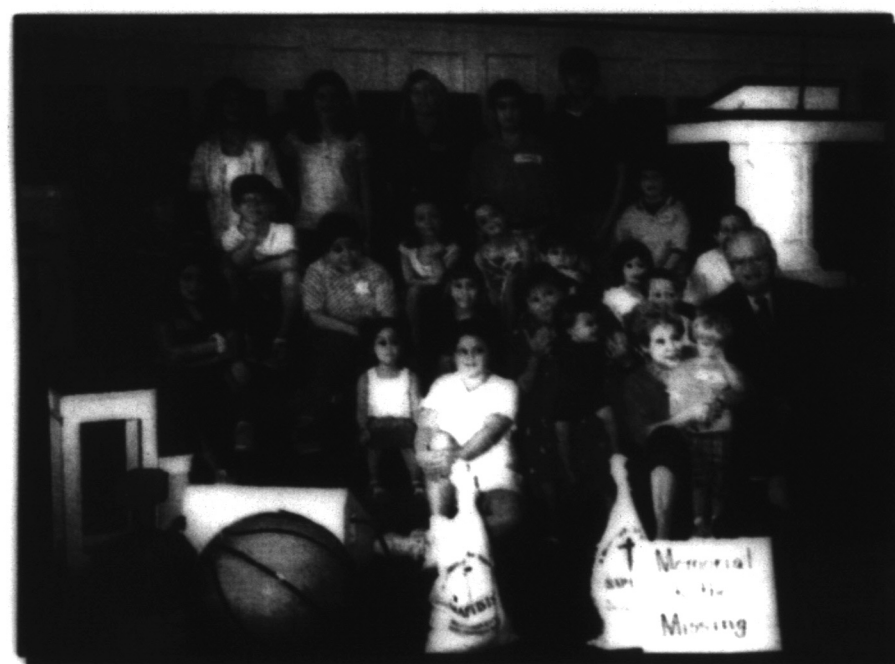
6. **Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale**, ordained Greg Pitts as deacon Sept. 2. Shown are Pitts, Nancy Pitts, and pastor Greg Barker.

7. **Williamsville Church, Kosciusko**, recognizes its GAs. Shown are Anna Miles, Haley Smith, Jodi Crowson, Kimberly Clark, Robin Crowson, Hanna Smith, Amy Cappeli, and Becca Cappeli.

8. **Locke Station Church, Marks**, held a deacon ordination Aug. 12. Shown are pastor Eric Payne, James Jenkins, Royce Locke, Jason Locke, and Bobby Scott.



4. Baby Dedication, Forest Church, Forest



5. Pennies delivered, First Church, Coldwater



6. Deacon Ordination, Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale



7. GAs, Williamsville Church, Kosciusko



8. Deacon Ordination, Locke Station Church, Marks

JUST FOR THE RECORD



9. Deacon Ordination, Navilla Church, McComb



10. Deuschle recognized, Black Jack Church, Yazoo Association

9. **Navilla Church, McComb**, ordained George Duncan Aug. 26. Shown is Duncan and deacon Glenn Sharp.

10. **Black Jack Church, Yazoo Association**, recently recognized Ed Deuschle at the completion of his interim pastorate at the church. He and his wife, Rita, received a silver tray from the congregation.

11. Roy Moody, pastor of **Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg**, held a creek baptism at Moody's Landing in Brooklyn, baptizing seven new members. Shown are Moody and the first candidate, Emily Cooper.

12. **Cedar View Church, Olive Branch**, will host a community singing Sept. 16, 6 p.m. First Baptist Church, featured musicians.

13. **Leaf River Church, Pineville**, will host The Sunset Boys Sept. 30, 6 p.m., followed by fellowship. For more information, call (601) 789-5476.

14. **Lyon Church, Lyon**, held a One Won 1 witnessing training conference June 16, led

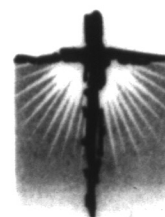
by P.J. and Betty Scott, Olive Branch, with 13 participating. The group learned how to write and share their testimonies and afterwards visited potential church prospects in their community and surrounding area. Don Lum, evangelism director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board set up the event.

15. **Shiloh Church, Carroll County**, will host Jerry and Tammy Sullivan in concert Sept. 30, 10:45 a.m. A love offering will be received.

16. **Goodrum Church, Vicksburg**, will host a gospel singing Sept. 22, 6 p.m., featuring Heaven's Journey, Jack Hollingsworth, and the Born Again Quartet. The concert is a benefit for pastor Roy Rogers.

17. **Newhebron Church, Newhebron**, is hosting a women's conference Sept. 29, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Special guest, Marolyn Ford. Ford became blind at 18, but was healed of her blindness in 1972. Pre-registration, \$10; \$12 at door, which includes continental breakfast and lunch.

18. **Williamsville Church, Williamsville**, recognizes its children's Bible Drillers. Shown are Charlie Plunkett, Anna Miles, Ethan Griffin, and Eddie Plunkett.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



11. Creek Baptism, Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg



18. Children Bible Drillers, Williamsville Church, Williamsville

Poydras Baptists reopen first church since Hurricane Katrina

POYDRAS, La. (BP) — Poydras Church has become the first Southern Baptist church in St. Bernard Parish, La., to return to its worship center since Hurricane Katrina devastated the area two years ago.

That the church did so is testament to the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program, Pastor John Galey says. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptist's way of combining the efforts and resources of local churches to make a difference in the lives of people across the nation and around the world.

Galey opened an Aug. 11 dedication of the renovated worship center by reading a list of 50 churches and associations that had a part in the rebuilding.

"We experienced the reality of the Cooperative Program," Galey told Baptist Press. "We give 10% — we consider it a tithe. We know the good the Cooperative Program does here in Louisiana and around the world, but there's a difference between knowing something and experiencing it."

"We've had hundreds of people working on our church. I'd say maybe even close to a thousand," Galey said. "Churches large and small, working together to do something that without the joint effort would have been overwhelming. That's what the Cooperative Program does."

A DVD produced by the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in Nashville, titled *The Difference*, Vol. 2, features 30 video stories of how Southern Baptists worked together in the aftermath of Katrina. Galey is featured in at least two segments.

On the DVD, Galey recalls a prayer to God upon his return to St. Bernard Parish a month after the storm. By that time most of the dead had been found, and all the rest had been evacuated. There was no electricity and no fresh water. Police, military, and other first-responders were there, plus Galey and the gunk.

"OK, Lord, what am I called to do?" he asked. "I'm called to tell people about Jesus," he reminded himself. "So I ordered a bunch of tracts, kept on with my quiet time, and studied and prepared like I was preparing for Sunday morning, and I grabbed those tracts and went out in the community where I lived and told people about Jesus."

Only a few residents returned to St. Bernard Parish before December 2005. Missouri Baptists were there a month before that. They found a mud-caked, stench-ridden, broken-down shell of a community with trash everywhere, and houses still straddling the highway.

Missouri Baptists, Galey said, "adopted" St. Bernard Parish.

"First Baptist Arabi needed to [be torn] down, St. Bernard Baptist had water up to the roof and had oil all in the church," Galey said of two other local churches. "... I was the first one back into the area, and out of all the churches, I was told that we were the only one structurally sound. Missouri [Baptists] began using their resources to help us, and for two months basically I was like a go-fer for them ... There was always something to be done."

"Being on the receiving end of the Cooperative Program, it's a time for me to sit back and actually be ministered to, and I'm humbled by that, and grateful and thankful for it," Galey said on the DVD.

He says the same thing today. "What we've gone through has made the Cooperative Program more real to me," Galey told Baptist Press. "Knowing something and experiencing it are two different things. With Katrina, I experienced the reality of the Cooperative Program... It's basically churches cooperating together and pooling resources."

Katrina's floodwaters had reached above the four-and-a-half foot mark in Poydras Church's three buildings: the worship center, fellowship hall, and educational building. The roofs of the fellowship hall and educational building also were damaged.

"It totally destroyed everything," Galey said. "Everything had to go."

Locals began trickling back in mid-December 2005 to St. Bernard Parish a few miles southeast of New Orleans, living in FEMA trailers while they worked on their homes. The trickle grew a bit stronger after January 2006, and by five months after the storm Galey knew it was time to restart services.

The first service was in February 2006, in the partially-restored fellowship hall of Poydras Church. About 60 people — 35 from St. Bernard, in addition to volunteers and dignitaries — participated in that first

service. Galey preached from Matthew 16, where Jesus said He'll build His church, and afterward six people from Walker, La., served the congregation jambalaya they had cooked in the church parking lot.

About 100 people attended Poydras Church before Katrina; about 70 attend now.

"We're doing well," Galey said. "Our tithes and offerings are about what they were pre-Katrina. There's a great unity, a great peace in the church."

All construction is done. Gray carpet has been laid, and dark blue pew chairs have been brought in. There's a cross in the baptistry and a clear acrylic pulpit. The music comes from an Integrity Worship DVD, fronted by a five-person praise ensemble.

"All our energy and focus was on rebuilding," Galey said. "Now we're restructuring and reorganizing the church. I'm ministering in the community, and we're having a lot of children and youth activities — kids camps, baseball camps, Vacation Bible School things to get the community involved."

Poydras Church meets in homes one evening a week for Bible study. Sunday School is scheduled to start this month.

"God has really revealed His goodness to me, the realness of who He is," Galey said. "I don't want to say my behavior has always been great, but despite my failure and my attitude — I remember saying [after Katrina] 'Why did this happen on my watch? It's not as if ministry wasn't hard enough before' — God has displayed His faithfulness and His goodness to me."

"Katrina has changed the way we do church," he continued. "Since the storm God has removed the negativity from within the church ... Katrina really changed me in that I have extremely low tolerance for foolishness in the church. Patience, yes, patience with those who don't know better and those who are young or weak in their faith, but since Katrina and going through all I went through, I'm not putting up with the foolishness of those who should know better. I'm not putting up with that."

Since Katrina, since being on the receiving end of the Cooperative Program, Galey said, he's become more missions-focused, more missions-driven. "Now I've internalized it," he said. "Now I get it. Hey, this is what we're to be about."



3. BSU Missionaries, MDCC

1. Mississippi College will welcome a parade of the state's politicians to give their best stump speeches at an "I Love America Day" event on the Clinton campus next month. Invitations are going to Gov. Haley Barbour, Democratic gubernatorial challenger John Arthur Eaves and a slew of candidates for other key state offices. Others hoping to appear include Pearl lawyer Gregg Harper, chairman of the Rankin County Republican Executive Committee. An MC graduate, Harper is a candidate for the Third District congressional seat being vacated by outgoing U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering, R-Flora. Lunch on the MC Quad and music will add to the festivities in an event sponsored by MC's Student Government Association, said SGA President Aaron Graham, 21, of Jackson.

2. The New Orleans Seminary student enlistment office will sponsor a

Preview Weekend for prospective seminary students on October 25-27. As guests, prospective students will tour the campus, meet faculty and staff, and learn more about admission requirements, degree programs, cost of attendance, financial aid, scholarships, housing, student organizations, and other important information about life at NOBTS. Activities available include opportunities to attend classes, a special chapel service, meetings with professors in the prospective student's area of interest, a special reception at the President's home and a dinner on the town with a faculty member. Registration/check-in will begin at 4:30 p.m. The registration deadline is one week before the event. The cost for the weekend is \$25 per person. This fee pays for two nights of accommodations and dinner Thursday night, 3 meals on Friday and breakfast on

Saturday morning. Those interested can receive registration forms by contacting the Office of Student Enlistment at 1-800-NOBTS-01, ext. 3303 or accessing the Student Enlistment website at www.nobts.edu/Enlistment/PreviewWeekend.html.

3. The BSU of Mississippi Delta Community College sent eight summer missionaries this past year. The BSU made Thanksgiving, Christmas, and spring mission trips to Mexico and Atlanta. First Church, Moorhead and the BSU helped raise funds for summer missionaries through a campus dinner theater, Meet Me at Luigi's. Shown are some of the dinner theater participants. The BSU also offered the presentation Arise, My Love at several area churches, and the Praise Band led in Sunday evening church services.

4. July 2007 graduates from New Orleans seminary with Mississippi ties include Jeremy McCrory, Kosciusko, with a master of arts in Christian education; Scott Fortenberry, Clinton, with a master of divinity; Charles Wallace, Jackson, with a master of divinity; and David Williams, Brookhaven, with a master of divinity-church ministry track.

5. A. L. Siggers from Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Hattiesburg awarded two William Carey University students, Dennis Ellzey of Hattiesburg and Howard Garrett of McLain, with the A. L. Siggers Scholarship. Originally created for students who were members of Mt. Olive Baptist Church



5. Scholarships awarded, WCU

with plans to use their career in ministry, the A. L. Siggers Scholarship was expanded in 2007 to include students at William Carey University. "I am a firm believer in education and therefore strive to take an active part in the educational process," said Siggers. Both church related vocations majors, Ellzey and Garratt are majoring in psychology and religion respectively.

6. Two new residence halls, the first constructed on the Hattiesburg campus of William Carey University in more than 40 years, opened in August to satisfied students, both male and female. Byrd Hall for women and Braswell Hall for men currently house 95 students each in semi-private rooms. Lobbies, vending machines, and laundry rooms are located on each of the three floors in both halls. The halls are connected by one large common lobby in the center of the buildings and a covered porch area with patio furni-

ture. Wall treatments and decorations were chosen to enhance the buildings and be appealing to both genders. Residence rooms also include microwave ovens, refrigerators, individual room climate control, new furniture, sinks in each room, and contemporary design elements from color coordinated rooms to paintings and wall hangings.



6. New dorm, WCU

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



1. Senior Adult Ladies Class, Shiloh Church, Marion County

1. Shiloh Church, Marion County: July 15-19; shown is the senior adult ladies class: seated, Emma Mullins, Billie Sue Pittman; standing, Pat Jones, Charlene Campbell, Helen Jones, Dot Campbell, Martha Broom, Darlene Foster, and Willodean Bullock.

2. The Vacation Bible School of Palestine Church, Plantersville, had a canned food drive for the Nettleton Food Pantry, collecting more than 800 cans for the mission project. Shown are some of the participants.



Practical Principles / Christian Living

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION • VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 9

Aborted Babies: The Memorial is Their Marker

By Dr. Jerry Nixon
Stewardship Director

Abortion! No word seems to have divided America more than this one word. Place all of the other words together that project images and no word is loaded with baggage like this

word. Some sing it as a fight song while others equate it to a freedom song.

In the midst of this struggle to have it one way or another (abortions or no abortions), some have suggested we should settle for simply having less abortions. At first glance, that seems reasonable. Think about crime for a moment. We realize that we cannot stop crime altogether, but we can reduce crime; therefore, we do all we can from neighborhood watches to hiring more policemen. We even applaud cities that reduce their crime rate by percentage points. While it sounds great, ask some politician to try and get elected on a platform to reduce murders in his/her city from 50 to 10. He/she can run on reducing crime but not on reducing murder. The idea that it should be per-

MEMORIAL to the Missing

mitted to a lesser extent is insulting. Isolating a single crime like murder allows all to see it for what it really is and that makes even one murder unacceptable. Others would cry out that in the slaughter of the unborn, we have destroyed the lives of potential men and women who could have made a wonderful contribution to society.

Doctors, lawyers, and missionaries, coupled with various other meaningful professions now have been wasted. That argument is flawed because the case

may be made that we have also prevented some evil to run rampant through the world because if the previous be true, then it may be assumed that we also destroyed rapists, murderers, and child molesters who may have chosen to use their existence to bring evil upon the world.

The choice to produce evil or good with our lives remains with the individual and is then judged by a society governed by laws. It does not seem just for us

to become the source to make the decision to prevent the birth of one life even if we could deem before conception that life would produce good or evil. How can we judge a tree by an acorn? So we have become judge, jury and executioner.

Our courts and justice system have a base assumption that better that one criminal should go free than one innocent man be pronounced guilty. Our courts believe all are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. May God help us to open our eyes and grant the right of birth to all

instead of condemning over 50 million unborn babies to be destroyed before they have the opportunity to physically enter into our imperfect world.

A well-known football icon recently was indicted for running a dog-fighting ring and killing dogs. I have two beautiful Labs that I could not think of treating in that manner. I was not upset, I was mad. However, I wondered in the quietness of my spirit, "where is the outrage when over 50 million human beings have been destroyed? Where are the politicians? Where are the clergy who should be the defenders of the weak and helpless? Why are we up in arms, so to speak, over the killing of dogs and not over the killing of the unborn? Unborn babies are cast into waste baskets, flushed down a toilet, or discarded in some other distasteful manner. There are not even grave markers to acknowledge their existence."

The Memorial to the Missing is their marker. Approximately 6 million pennies are still needed to reach the 50 million penny goal. You can help by sending checks or cash to the Mississippi Baptist Convention and designating your gift to The Memorial to the Missing. With your help, we can help women choose life for their unborn babies.

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CLEARVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH of Birmingham, Alabama is accepting resumes for the position of full time Children's Pastor. Send resume to Clearview Baptist Church, attn: children's pastor search committee, 5271 Old Springville Road, Pinson, AL 35126 or email to connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

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CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, located on 49 south in Braxton, Miss., seeking a part-time minister of music. Send resumes to Calvary Baptist Church, attn: music committee, P.O. Box 111, Braxton, MS 39044.

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P.O. Box 578, Crystal Springs, MS 39059-9715, pastor (662) 312-8564 (cell) or church (601) 892-1151.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH/ MUSIC. Parkview Baptist Church, Greenville, MS is seeking a full-time minister of youth and/or music. Please send resume' to Personnel Committee, 712 McAllister Street, Greenville, MS 38701 or email to parkviewp@bellsouth.net.

HICKORY RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH, Florence, Miss., is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music. Average church attendance 150. Please send resume to search committee, 1857 Florence Byram Rd., Florence, MS 39073. Or email to resume@hickoryridgebaptist.org. College students welcome to apply.

CLEAR BAPTIST CHURCH, Florence, Miss., seeks a children's minister. Please submit resumes to M. Vance, 129 N. Eagle Ridge Drive, Florence, MS 39073.

CHILDREN'S/YOUTH DIRECTOR needed for Union Baptist Church, located at 345 Hwy 27 North, Tylertown, MS. The church is located 45 west of Hattiesburg and 20 miles east of McComb. Interested parties may obtain further information about this position from Rev. Millard Moak at (601) 876-3567 or (601) 876-2243.

HILLSBORO BAPTIST CHURCH, Hillsboro, Miss., is seeking a bi-vocational music director. Send resumes to Linda Brown, music committee, 1176 Hillsboro-Ludlow Road, Forest, MS 39074.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

P.O. Box 27
Clinton, MS 39060-0027
(601) 922-2242

www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this very meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor and thank our supporters, friends, and family. Please contact us for more information.

As the old songs says,

"It's beginning to look
a lot like Christmas..."

well that may not be exactly true with these warm September days, but The Baptist Children's Village staff has already begun planning for the Christmas holiday and we need your help. We need Christmas tree lights and other decorations for the season. Please let us know if you can help.

Contact us at:

601-922-2242

www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

AUG. 27-SEPT. 10, 2007

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painting a cottage on The India Nunnery Campus in Jackson. Many thanks to

all for helping us conquer this

monumental task!

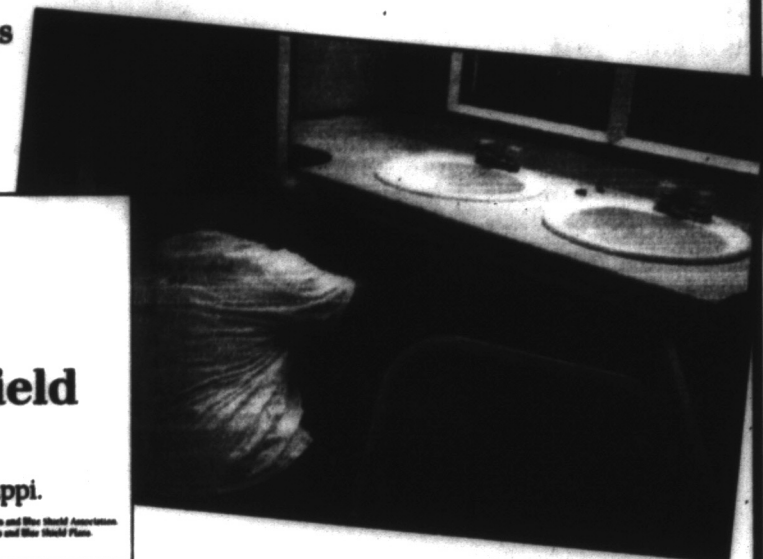


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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of
Mississippi Finance and
Pricing Group chose to
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Employees spent the day



Current Needs List:

- Two \$100 sponsors for choir dresses
- \$150 for a student to participate in a UN Council
- Laundry detergent
- Scrubbing bubbles
- Lysol



The Baptist Children's Village is the recipient of a generous gift from Albert Carver who was a member at Park Place Church in Rankin County. C. F. "Charlie" Tillman, executor of Carver's estate, (left) recently presented the gift to Rory Lee, executive director of The Baptist Children's Village (right). Tillman, long time friend and confidant to Carver and a member of Briar Hill Church, shared that though Carver had no children of his own, he always had a soft spot in his heart for our BCV children. We are grateful for his generosity through the years and certainly in this ultimate munificent gift.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Facing the Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:1-30 (Focal Passages 3:1-2, 4-6, 8, 12-24, 16-18, 24-26, 28)

By Alice Smith

In this very familiar story that we have heard since we were children, we see King Nebuchadnezzar up to his old tricks of throwing his weight around and wielding unyielding control over the people in his kingdom. Consumed with his own power and full of ego and pride, he shows that he has no heart for Daniel's God. He erects a huge gold statue that is so large it can be seen from fifteen miles away and commands everyone to come to the dedication of the image. He instructed the people that when they heard the many instruments and all kinds of music they were to bow down and worship the idol. Those who did not would be cast into a furnace of blazing fire.

Of course, we can guess what happens next. Jealousy rears its ugly head and sly men come to the king to report on the men of God who refuse to obey the king. The words are there for us to read in Verse 12 of Chapter 3 (HCSB) "There are some Jews you have appointed to manage the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men have ignored you, the king; they do not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up." Isn't this true of human nature today? How quick we are to want to bring down a peg or two those of whom we are jealous, those who threaten our position or status, by our whispers, our innuendoes, and our criticisms.



Smith

At the challenge from the king, the three men respond with mighty and courageous words in verses 17-18 (NAS): "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. (18) But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Fighting words that lead to one conclusion: a trip to a furnace so hot that the guards who approach to throw them into the midst of it are burned to a crisp. What courage, what faith. No matter what the outcome, His to the end (or perhaps the beginning?).

Do these words have significance today? Are we willing to follow Christ no matter what? Can we even imagine it? There have been great people of God who have followed Christ through great sacrifice: Bill

Wallace of China, Lottie Moon, Corrie Ten Boom, Christians in Darfur, Sudan who are being martyred as we speak.

Let's bring it down to the small sacrifices that may be required of us in our society today. What is our Christian witness in the workplace? Our response to the dirty joke, the gossip and slander of someone, the request to "doctor" the report? The fiery furnace of a desire for popularity and acceptance by the group at large can get pretty hot.

As Christians, we need to determine ahead of time, before the sticky situation develops, that we will respond to all situations with the love and strength of Christ. Meditating on this resolve "before the fact" can go a long way in making us strong when we find ourselves in the midst of the temptation.

Filled with anger, Nebuchadnezzar orders the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal. When God acts in our lives, he doesn't do it just enough to get by, he does it all the way. You know the rest of

the story. Once again, God reveals his power and sovereignty to this blustering, little king. As Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace he is shocked and astounded. There are FOUR people walking in the furnace...and in the words of the king, he says in verse 25b(HCSB): "and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

The men come out of the furnace completely untouched by the roaring fire and, once again, King Nebuchadnezzar extols the power of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

God warns against the dangers of falling into the trap of making our own idols to worship. We may find ourselves in danger of replacing Him, the Holy One, with man-made nonsense. A measuring stick useful in determining the level you have reached in knowing and loving God is to ask yourself a question: "How much do I desire to really obey God?" 1 Samuel 15:22 says, "to obey is better than sacrifice."

Smith is a member of First Church, Jackson.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE Strive For Godly Perfection

Matthew 5:20-26, 38-48

By Michael Smith

The folks who design and engineer Lexus automobiles are motivated by one simple passion: the relentless pursuit of perfection. This relentless pursuit of perfection does not imply that Lexus has created THE perfect car, but that they have made creating the perfect car their aim. The relentless pursuit of perfection should also be the biblically informed aim of any disciple of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7 provides us with a biblical perspective on the pursuit of perfection.

1. The Standard to Exceed (Matthew 5:20)

In the Old Testament book of Job, we are confronted with many of life's toughest questions. Is God really in control? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why does God allow us to suffer? These are

indeed some of life's toughest questions. In Job 9:2, however, we encounter the question of the ages and the most important question that any person can ever ask: Can a man be righteous in the eyes of God?

Can a person be righteous in the eyes of God? The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day would reply to this question with a resounding "YES!" Righteousness, in the minds of the scribes and Pharisees was a matter of dutifully adhering to a collection of religious rules. They attributed supreme value to human effort. The scribes and Pharisees believed that tenacious compliance to the law would yield personal righteousness. The scribes and Pharisees, therefore, were single-minded in their desire to keep the law. Single-minded obedience to God is a just and worthy aspiration in life, if the moti-



Smith

vation for such single-minded obedience is just and worthy. Unfortunately, the scribes and Pharisees' motivation was flawed. They desired righteousness for the purpose of appeasing God rather than for the purpose of pleasing God. The proper motivation for the relentless pursuit of perfection is not to appease God, but to please God.

The scribes and Pharisees believed that they could behave in such a manner that would appease the righteousness of God. The truth of the matter is that no one can behave in a manner that appeases the righteousness of God. The Bible makes clear that no one is righteous (Romans 3:10-11) and that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The collaboration of all our human effort falls miserably short of attaining righteousness in the eyes of God. The righteousness that God desires of us and demands from us is not the result of human behavior; it is the gracious work

of a loving God on our behalf (Romans 5:21-26). When Jesus demands that our righteousness surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, he is warning us against any claim to righteousness that is based on human effort.

2. Behavior Towards Others (Matthew 5:21-26, 38-42, 43-47).

Righteousness that comes from God should result in right behavior towards others. Life-transforming righteousness that results from the redemptive grace of God should be manifested in how we relate to others. The righteousness that results from God's grace liberates us to relate to others redemptively rather than manipulatively. We should not view others as a means to curry God's favor but as an opportunity to convey God's love. Jesus provides a series of test cases to demonstrate righteous behavior towards others. The righteousness that comes from the grace of God enables us to be forgiving with friends (5:21-26), patient with impossible people (5:38-42), and longsuffering towards those who cause us to suffer (5:43-47). This righteous

behavior towards others is not motivated by the desire to appease God, but by the desire to please God.

3. The Standard to Seek (Matthew 5:48)

The relentless pursuit of perfection should define your life's aim as a disciple of Christ. Jesus desires and demands that we seek perfection in such a way that mirrors the supreme perfection of God. What a paradox — Jesus demands perfection from imperfect people. The secret to finding joy in this paradox is simply realizing that you are becoming what you already are in Christ. It's simply a matter of practicing in the details of everyday life what is already a reality in God's eyes. The relentless pursuit of perfection is encapsulated in Paul's promising testimony in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (NIV).

Smith is pastor of Bethel Church, Monticello.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will

be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be

clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

God first: Top college QB sets priorities, goals in order

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (BP) — Holding the most high-profile position on college football's defending national championship team — making him the biggest Big Man on Campus at a football-crazed school — could easily go to the head of any college sophomore.

Tim Tebow says football is not even the third most important thing in his life.

"I am fortunate to have family members, coaches and teammates around who can help me stay focused on the right things for us to be successful. For me, every day includes four things: God, family, academics and football, in that order," Tebow told the Florida Baptist Witness, the news journal of the Florida Baptist Convention.

In a sign of the media scrutiny and time pressure his schedule is under, University of Florida Sports Information staffer Zack Higbee told the Witness

there were hundreds of interview requests for Tebow as the Gators prepare to defend their championship, and it was impossible to grant every one of them.

The university accommodated the Witness's interview request by having questions to Tebow submitted in writing and receiving his

written replies via Higbee.

Although Tebow was the back-up quarterback last year, even as a true freshman he saw significant duty in all 14 games, including the national championship game against Ohio State. He finished the season as the team's second-leading rusher and first with eight rushing touchdowns.

In 2007, however, Tebow is the starting quarterback and undisputed leader of the Gators in their drive to match the school's basketball team as back-to-back national champions.

For Tebow, the way to deal with the pressure that comes with the territory is to ignore most of what others say about him.

"I don't really listen too much since it's important to stay in the middle and not get too high or too low. Florida fans are passionate and that's what makes them great. Being cheered or criticized is all part of sports and how everything goes in cycles," Tebow said.

The other key in keeping balance in his life is his relationship with Christ.

Tebow grew up in a Christian family, led by missionary parents Bob and Pam Tebow. The Tebows are members of First Church in Jacksonville. He began his walk with Christ as a six-year-old and has regularly traveled with his family during summers to the Philippines, where he was born, to lead evangelistic crusades and minister in orphanages.

Although his college commitments prevented him from going to the Philippines this summer, Tebow told the Witness the experiences of ministering there remain with him — and is something he will pursue in the future because "it is a valuable part of my life."

Reflecting on the people to whom he has ministered, Tebow said, "Meeting all of those different people who have nothing and are poor gave me an appreciation for what me and my family have and provided me with the perspective of taking nothing for granted. It also allowed me to see the effect that I could have on those people."

"For some, the belief in Christ is all that they have and is much more important than money or material possessions."

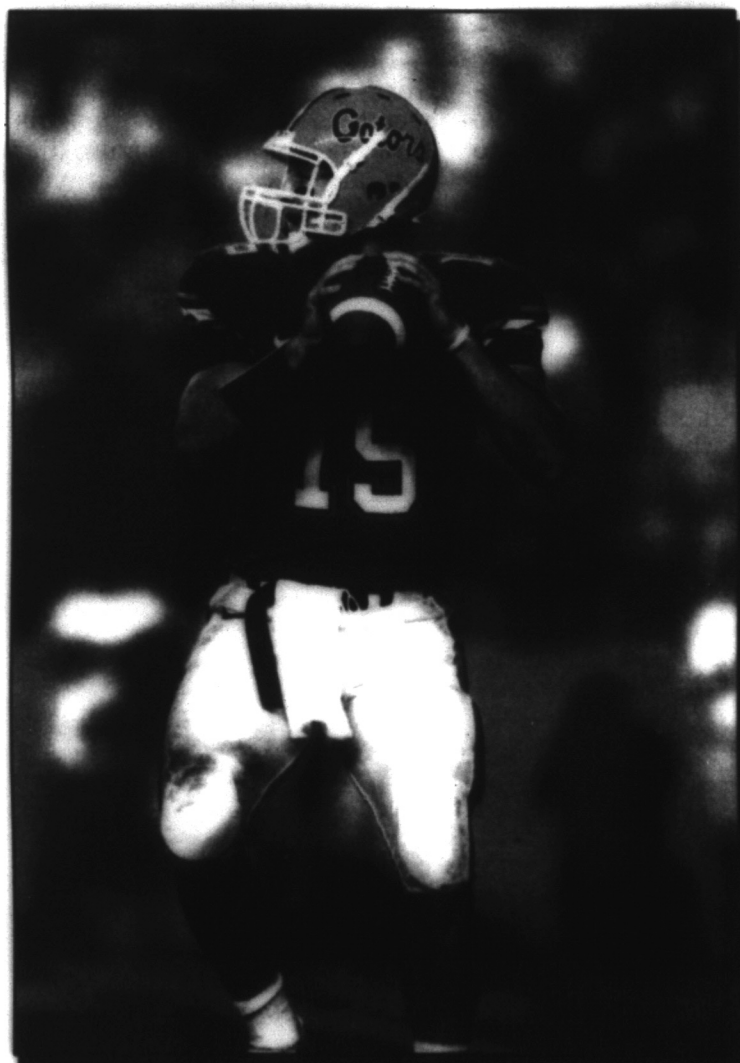
Majoring in family, youth, and community sciences, Tebow said he is "trying to take advantage" of the educational opportunity he has at the University of Florida — the alma mater of his parents.

Although his parents have counted Florida-Georgia as the school's biggest rivalry, Tebow relishes the game against the Florida State Seminoles since the game often played a pivotal role in the national championship aspirations of both schools during the time he grew up as a Gator fan.

It's no surprise, then, that former Gator quarterback and 1996 Heisman Trophy winner Danny Wuerffel is Tebow's role model, both on and off the field.



OFF-FIELD WITNESS — Tim Tebow takes a break from his duties as starting quarterback at University of Florida summer workouts in July to play Goliath in a children's musical at his home church, First Church in Jacksonville, Fl. (BP photo)



CHAMPION'S DRIVE — After sharing quarterbacking duties last season, Tim Tebow moves into role of starting quarterback and undisputed leader of the University of Florida's drive this season to repeat as national champions. Tebow is a member of First Church, Jacksonville, Fl. (BP photo)

"I saw how he treated people and learned to treat everyone how I wanted to be treated," Tebow said. "He was such a positive role model both on the field, academically and spiritually and would always make time for people by signing autographs, taking pictures with them ..."

Today, Wuerffel, who quarterbacked NFL's Washington Redskins and New Orleans Saints, leads Desire Street Ministries in New Orleans, which seeks to rebuild impoverished neighborhoods through spiritual and community development.

For Tebow, staying spiritually grounded includes leading a Bible study in his apartment on Sunday nights. Attended mostly by fellow football players, Tebow said the athletes "spend time talking about the Lord."

Although Mac Brunson, senior pastor of First Church in Jacksonville, has not known Tebow very long, he is impressed with the joy and humility that marks the young man.

"I really think that he has a heart full of joy," Brunson told the Witness. "He's always smiling. He always seems to be upbeat."

Brunson said Tebow spoke at the church's annual pastors' conference last year and impressed evangelist Junior Hill, who told Brunson it was "the best testimony I have ever heard from an athlete."

Tebow's commitment to the church was illustrated in July when he played Goliath opposite a six-year-old boy as David in the church's children's musical. "I think he just got a kick out of doing that with those children," Brunson said.

"When I think of Tim, I think of a young man who is incredibly talented, who is sharp academically, and is deep spiritually, and is humble in all of it," Brunson added.

Asked by the Witness how Christians can pray for him, Tebow said that although it would be "great" if people prayed for him, "there are many other things in the world to focus upon today, especially in their own families."

Tebow added, "I am no different than anyone else in the room, despite what people may think, because I am a Gator football player. It is important for each person to sit down and be honest about making priorities and being true to themselves."